**TITLE: COMPASSION**

**TEXT: Mk. 1:41-42; Mt. 20:29-34; Col. 3:12;**

**Mt. 9:36-38; Jn. 21:15-17; 2 Co. 9:12-15**

**INTRODUCTION:** This morning I want to talk about compassion.

A man was out of town on a trip and he asked his brother to take care of his cat for him while he was away. The cat was a beautiful Siamese and meant a great deal to the man, although the brother who was caring for the cat didn't like cats at all. When he got back from the trip he called his brother's house and asked about his cat. The brother was very curt, and replied, "Your cat died." And then he hung up.

 For days the man was inconsolable. Finally, he phoned his brother again to point out, "It was needlessly cruel and sadistic of you to tell me so bluntly that my poor cat had passed away." The brother demanded, "Well, what did you expect me to do?" He said, "Well, you could have broken the bad news to me gradually. First, you could have said the cat was playing on the roof. Later you could have called to say he fell off. The next morning you could have reported he had broken his leg. Then, when I came to get him, you could have told me he had passed away during the night. But you didn't have it in you to be that civilized. Now tell me--how's Mama?" The brother pondered momentarily, then announced, "She's playing on the roof."

Where is the compassion?

 I read a true war story a while back ..

When war is in progress, there is a medical practice and policy by which assistance is given to the wounded.

 Known as “triage”, this practice involves “sorting” the wounded into categories. It is up to the judgment of the doctors or medical personal on duty to “color tag” the wounded according to their condition.

 One color of tag means the case is hopeless---there is nothing that can be done medically to save the soldiers life.

 Another color means that this person will recover with or without immediate medical attention. The third color indicates a doubtful prognosis…these might have a chance only if medical assistance is given.

 When medical supplies and personal are in short supply, assistance is to be given only to this third category---people who might make it if given medical help. Nothing is done for the other two categories.

 A man named Lou, who served with the US armed forces in Korea, was hit by a grenade. His body was blown apart and one leg was severely damaged.

 The first doctor who examined him made the decision that Lou was a hopeless case and beyond medical assistance, and tagged him as such.

 In this act the doctor, in actuality, left Lou to die.

 One of the nurses noticed Lou was conscious and began talking with him. In the course of conversation, they discovered they were both from the same town back home in Ohio. Since getting to know Lou in this short period of time as a person and not just another soldier, this nurse felt she couldn’t just let him die. So she disobeyed orders and broke all the rules.

 She changed his colored tag to the category that indicated he might make it if given medical help and assistance.

 Lou was later placed in an ambulance that took him to a field hospital where he spent months in recovery.

 Lou made it! He recovered.

 While in the hospital he met a nurse who would become his wife. Even without one leg, which was amputated, Lou has led a full, happy and productive life. All this was possible because of compassion a field nurse broke all the rules of triage and changed a tag!

 This story reminded me of a time when Jesus was on Triage….

**Mark 1:41-42 (NIV)**

**40A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”**

**41Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!”****42Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.**

In a triage situation in that day this man with leprosy would have drawn the tag that said that there was no hope.

In that time in history leprosy was a death sentence!

It was a deadly and incurable disease. It would eat away at the flesh until it consumed it. Infectious sores and gangrene would eventually kill most of its victims.

If someone showed signs of this disease they would be cast out of the city, isolated from the rest of the population.

 They would have to carry a sign that others could see from a distance that would say that they were lepers. They would be expected to cry out unclean! Unclean! If anyone approached them.

 Society shunned them for fear of catching what they had. They were often looked upon as cursed by God. Society tagged them as hopeless and left them to die.

One such man, who had evidentially heard of the healing power of Jesus, dared to approach Him. Yet not getting too close he cries out to Jesus, **If you are willing, you can make me clean.”**

How does Jesus respond? Does He see the tag of hopelessness, the sign of the leper, and turn away in fear or disgust leaving the man to perish in his condition?

No! It says….**41Filled with compassion; Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!”**

Do you realize the impact that just Jesus reaching out and touching this man must have had upon him?

Think about it? This man would have had no personal or intimate contact with another person since he had contracted this deadly disease!

 Think about what it would be like to see another person at a distance and have to cry out unclean, unclean, and then watch them cross over to pass you on the other side of the street..

You would have people star at you, children make fun of you, but all afraid to come into contact with you.

And then to have Jesus, not just say from a distance, be healed, but to actually have him come close and reach out and touch you!

I think that the ultimate healing of this man’s leprosy was possibly even secondary to the rush of emotion that this man must have felt when Jesus simply reached out and in compassion touched him.

I think that the compassion of Christ was not so much displayed in the healing of this man’s disease but His compassion was displayed the most in his willingness to reach out and simply touch him.

It is not easy to reach out and touch the unlovely is it?

All of us have a tendency to walk to the other side of the street rather than to put ourselves in a situation of possibly having to come into contact with those we perceive as untouchable….The lepers of our day.

People who, for whatever reason, we see as unapproachable. People that we may pity but not want to touch…

Example: When I worked at Dahl’s I had a man who worked for me named Doug. He was one of our full time employees that we would use around the front end to run breaks and keep an eye on the younger baggers.

Doug was working as a cashier on the express lane one evening in the mid to late 1970’s and a man comes through his line. The man has a surgical mask over his mouth and nose so Doug asked him if he were sick.

 The man informed Doug that he had HIV-aids.

I just happened to be at the front of the store when this was going on. After then man was checked out I see Doug make a run for the back room.

 Doug went back to wash his hands several times before he came back to his cash register and then got out the spray cleaner and wiped down his entire counter. Then he rushed back to wash his hands again.

 This was in the early days of aids before we had a lot of information on how it could be transmitted.

… At the time it seemed funny, but the fact is it was really pretty sad….

Many, if not most of us, have a tendency to respond to the unlovely of our world in this way, not wanting to touch or get too close and when we do it shows a lack of compassion.

Example: I remember another time when I worked Dahl’s in West Des Moines that a young man, 10-12 years old that would come shopping on occasion with his mom or dad. He had cerebral palsy and was strapped into high back wheelchair. He did not have a lot of mussel control.. His face mussels drooped, his speech was very slurred…he drooled.. his head would bob back and forth and up and down…

You know the normal reaction---look but don’t stare! Feel sorry for, pity-- but it is uncomfortable to get too close… Look but don’t touch!

One day when his parents brought him into the store I felt a different reaction.. Not mere pity, but compassion.

Do you know the difference between pity and compassion? Do you realize that they are two very different things

**pit·y 1. Sympathy and sorrow aroused by the misfortune or suffering of another.**

**com·pas·sion*.* Deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it.**

 Every time I had previously seen this young man come into the store I had pity on him. I was sympathetic for him and the condition that he was in.

 This particular day, for whatever reason, I had compassion for him. I became **Deeply aware of the suffering coupled with the desire to relieve it.**

For the first time I made a conscious effort to go over to where this young man was reach down and touch his hand, look him in the eye and actually talked to him.

 I couldn’t understand the words that he responded with but there was something in his eyes that said it all….

 His eyes did what the mussels in his face wouldn’t allow him to do…they smiled back…..

 Compassion did something else that day….It was accompanied by having the desire and feeling the need to start praying for that young man and his mom and dad….

Compassion will always result in some kind of action!

 Compassion is not just becoming aware of the suffering and distress of another but compassion is becoming aware of the suffering and distress of another coupled with a desire to do something to relieve that suffering and distress.

 Even if that something is just to reach out and touch that person in their suffering.

Jesus was always, first and foremost compassionate!

Compassion was probably the most visible and obvious attribute of His character that was revealed to us while He walked this earth.

 Jesus didn’t merely have pity upon the lost and hurting and crippled of this world but Jesus had compassion on them.

Compassion is always accompanied with action..

**Matthew 20:29 - 34 (NIV)**

**29As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him.****30Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”**

**31The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!”**

**32Jesus stopped and called them. “What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.**

**33“Lord,” they answered, “we want our sight.”**

**34Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.**

Compassion is always combined with action! Many times that action will be personal contact..

**34Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes.**

Compassion is a deep awareness of suffering coupled with the desire to relieve it.

 Do you realize that as a Christian that we are called to be a compassionate people?

**Colossians 3:12 (NIV)** **12Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.**

 As A Christian we have been called to clothe ourselves with compassion, particularly the compassion of Christ!

Clothe***= en-doo'-o***

**(in the senese of *sinking* into a garment); to *invest* with clothing .**

 **From****G1722** **En = Take up a fixed position and****G1416** **Doo-no = (to *sink*); to *go* “down”:—set.**

We have been called to take up a fixed position in compassion, to sink down into compassion. To put on compassion as we would put on our clothes. We are to cover ourselves with and in compassion..

 A Lady shares a personal story:

 As her flight from Denver to Wichita was boarding. On an ambulance litter an attendant carried a 225-pound man as the last traveler to board. As they cradled him into a seat in front of her, it was evident he was totally paralyzed from his shoulders down. He was strapped in tightly, but as the pilot taxied to the runway the centrifugal force lunged him to the right causing him to fall toward the next seat.

 The stewardess again propped him up in an upright position. Hastily, we were airborne. Beverages were served, then a meal. She said, As I finished the meal, I looked up to see the paralyzed man, probably twenty-seven years old, with the meal before him but no one to feed him. My eyes filled with tears. The hostesses were busy serving food to all passengers, but here was a person traveling alone who could only look at the meal. It was beautifully prepared, tasty, and far above average for airline food.

 Before I could wipe the tears from my eyes, I slipped from my seat to his side and inquired if the stewardess would be helping him eat. He did not know. I asked if I might help him. He responded with, "Oh, thank you, I would be so grateful for your help." As I cut the meal into bite sized pieces and placed them in his mouth, I felt awkward, conspicuous, but much needed.

 Before long I was coordinating bites as well as if they were entering my own mouth. He told me of his unfortunate accident, his lonesomeness, his joys, his struggles, his faith, his hope. His name was Bill.

Our spirits blended--we experienced sacrament!

This woman saw a paraplegic and didn’t respond with mere pity but she responded with compassion.

 She became deeply aware of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it.

 Compassion is always accompanied by action…

This woman clothed herself with the compassion of Christ on this particular day and it led her into action.

There is another area of compassion that I want to talk about this morning.

 It is an area of compassion that is essential for us to have if we are to fulfill our calling as a Christian…. If we are to do what God has ordained and called us to do….

 It also, is a compassion that was reflected and modeled to us by the life of Christ..

**Matthew 9:36 - -38 (NIV) 36When he (Jesus) saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”**

Jesus looked out over the crowd of people who had gathered and saw a people who were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

The Greek word for harassed used here is

**hrip'-to= in this context it seems to indicate being over extended, burdened as with a heavy load.**

 In any crowd that gathers today we can look out over the masses and see much the same thing… people who are harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

 People who are carrying heavy burdens and with no personal knowledge of Christ are left in a state of helplessness and despair.

 When Jesus looked out over the crowds of His day and saw all the people who were harassed by life’s trials and the helpless state of a people separated from God it says…

Seeing the condition that they were in He had compassion on them and that compassion resulted in action……The action….**38Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”**

 You and I are the workers that Jesus prayed would be sent out into the harvest field!

 You and I are the ones that Christ has called to go out into the world in which we live and bring His hope to the harassed and helpless of our world We have each been called to clothe ourselves with the compassion of Christ and then go out and administer that compassion in the part of the world in which we live.

 Bob Pierce once made this statement:

 *“ My single greatest concern is the growing apathy I see, apathy born out of our luxury and materialism. People are fooling themselves when they say the job is done. The vast body of people in the world today have never been given enough information to know if they accept or reject Jesus. Most people think what the gospel needs is more clever, skilled people, when what it needs is more people who are willing to bleed, suffer, and die in a passion to see people come to Christ. “*

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How compassionate are you this morning?

 Are you willing to bleed, suffer and even die, if that be necessary, to see people come to Christ?

 This is the compassion of Christ that we have been called to clothe ourselves with..

 The kind of compassion that Christ had for the lost of this world we can see as we look upon on the cross!

 We hear the compassion of His heart as He is hanging on that cross and as He looks out over the crowd that is gathered there, some of the very ones who helped put Him there, and He cries out with some of His dying breath, Father; Forgive them for they don’t know what they do…

 It is interesting that after Jesus had risen from the dead and He speaks with Peter, who had just a few days earlier denied even knowing who Jesus was because of his fear of what might happen to him if people knew he was a follower of Jesus…Jesus gives Peter as many opportunities to confess Him as times as he had previously disowned Him…

**John 21:15 - 17 (NIV)**

**15When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?”“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”**

**16Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”**

**17The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.**

 What was it that Jesus was trying to get Peter to grasp here?

 That one way, thee way that Peter could express His love for Christ was to feed and take care of His sheep…

 Sheep already within the fold and the countless sheep that were lost and scattered and would need a compassionate shepherd to go out and find them and bring them in…..

How is it that we truly show our love for Christ today?

The same way….. By having compassion! Compassion especially for the sheep that are lost and scattered and are yet to be brought into the fold of Gods Kingdom.

 People that are harassed and helpless and need to find the Savior.

 This morning do you have a compassion for the harassed and helpless, the lost of your world.

 Do you have a deep awareness of their suffering coupled with the wish and the desire to help relieve it.

 This is Missions Sunday and with it we have an opportunity to express our compassion to the lost of our world.

 We have the opportunity to give this morning so that others can go into parts of our world with the gospel message of Jesus Christ that we can’t, to reach those harassed by sin and helpless to do anything about it.

 This isn’t an excuse for us to do nothing in our own part of the world in which we reside but it gives us an opportunity to reach out even beyond our own little corner of the world and make a difference for Jesus….

Jesus said: if you love Me---feed my sheep….

 This is one way that we can do just that….Show our love for Christ by having a heart of compassion for all the lost and scattered sheep of our world by our giving so that others can go and administer that touch of compassion where we can’t...

Compassion always will require action on our part….

 In speaking about giving to enable others to go Paul has these words of encouragement…

**Corinthians 9:15 (NIV) 12This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.****13Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.****14And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you.****15Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!**

What is Gods indescribable gift? I believe it is the grace of giving that is motivated by a heart of compassion!